

HOLLAND





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Ben Verspeten.

HOLLAND

MEMORIES OF HOLLAND

Thinking of Holland
I see wide rivers
slowly winding
through endless lowland;
rows of delicate,
filigreed poplars,
plumelike, high
on the horizon stand;
snugly ensconced
in limitless space
farms lie scattered
all over the land;
trees and villages,
truncated towers,
churches and elms
form a pattern so grand;
the sky hangs low,
and slowly the sun
is wrapped in vapours
of varying grey;
and in all regions
the voice of the water,
herald of danger,
is heard with dismay.

H. MARSMAN



HOLLAND

A COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS
OF ED VAN WIJK, N.F.K.
EDUARD ELIAS WROTE THE TEXT

fifth edition



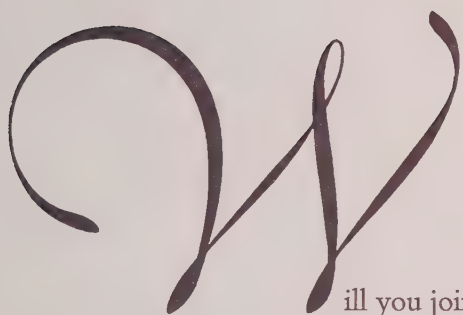
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Frontispiece: National high-day: Opening of Parliament. Arrival of the Queen in the Golden Coach

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WONDERLAND OUT OF THE WATER



Will you join me as I sit in my room in Scheveningen?

The window is wide open. A mild spring air pervades my room. Outside, the sun is shining. Inside, the room smells of hyacinths which – white and deep-blue – form a large bouquet on my desk. Bright yellow daffodils are on the mantelpiece.

It is a beautiful spring day in April. All Holland is aglow with flowers.

The sun is shining over the little fishing harbour of Scheveningen, glistening in the midday light. Fishing boats move lazily over the water. There is a dark mysterious dredger. And three white yachts.

Children play happily on the dunes.

In the distance I see a stretch of the dark green sea.

White birds are hovering on broad wings over the harbour.

Fishermen in solemn black are talking in the sun.

A woman in a white cap passes by, her wide slate-blue skirts billowing over her modest steps.

A scene like this is worth seeing. It is the real Holland, – and Holland at its loveliest.

Or you could be at Amsterdam and enjoy that city of cities: the magnificent old houses along the canals with windows shining in the sun; the artistic, capricious cornices of the facades silhouetted against the light blue of the spring sky.

The trees are olive green. A broad dark barge passes under a white bridge. Somewhere sounds a street organ.

Boats full of flowers lie along the «Singel». This is the floating flower market. It is difficult to realize what you are seeing when, coming from the hustling crowded centre of the city, you suddenly find yourself on that bridge and see all the boats ablaze with flowers in the sun. You had probably forgotten that there were so many colours. The little tower of the Mint gives out its carillon chimes. The air is gentle. Amsterdam is one of the finest cities in the world.

Go where you will through the Netherlands, and see how beautiful it is.

How wide and quiet is the landscape along its rivers. How clear and clean are its villages.

How noble its small, centuries-old towns with their treasures of churches and town halls their imposing gates; the narrow streets where the most intimate life of Holland is found.

Away to the north, in Friesland, the large bright lakes are sparkling in the sun. Sailing boats are gliding, white and quiet, over the glistening water.

Along the coast the beaches of Holland, wide and white, are lying in front of the mighty row of dunes.

In the woods of Gaasterland and Gelderland, of Brabant and the Veluwe, it is good to walk in the narrow paths, soft under foot.

It will not be long now before the orchards of the Betuwe and of Limburg are in full bloom, to provide, as a poet has put it, «the bridal bouquet for Holland the Bride».

It is a delight to be in this small country – a wonderland out of the water.

A country small as a dot, a tiny patch on the globe; a delta of large rivers wrested from the waves, as it is phrased so accurately.

A modern country which does not lag one step behind in the progress of mankind; but which still has lingering memories of the time when it was one of the world's mightiest countries. Memories in the facades of its stately patrician houses; in the beauty of its old churches, town halls and castles; in the priceless riches of its museums.

A modern country: see its straight Zuiderzee Dike, marvel of engineering, shielding its new pastures and fields where there was once a turbulent inland sea.

All this we can see, in reality or as mental pictures, as we sit at the open window.

So altogether Dutch.

Only two hundred paces away is the sea.

Right in front is the small, square fishing harbour of Scheveningen.

The pennants at the masts flutter lazily on the spring breeze.

A man in a red sweater is hammering on his deck, every stroke sounding loud and purposeful. A high, black cart full of brown fishing nets rattles by.

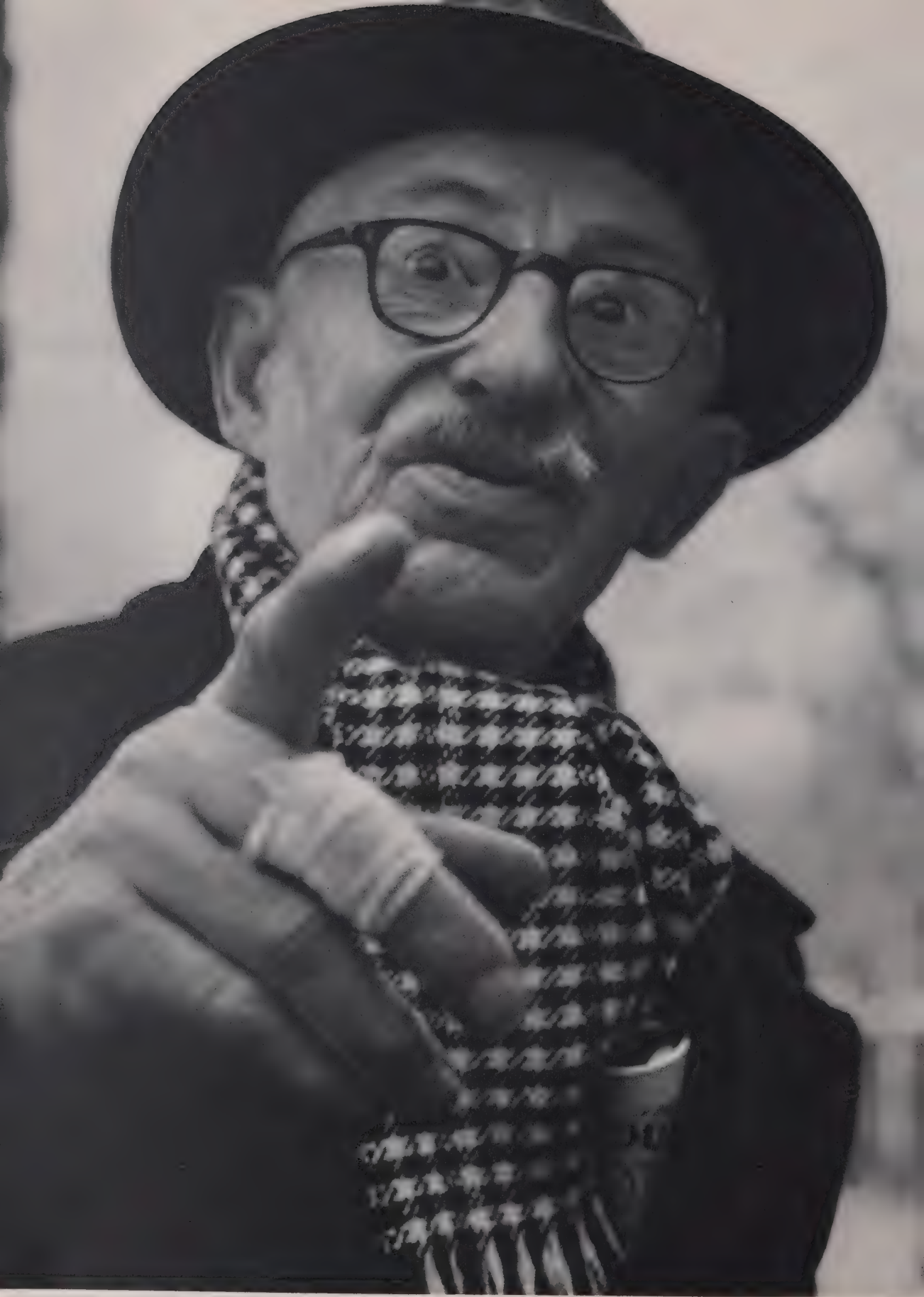
The fisherwoman in the white cap has met a friend. The sun glitters on the polished ornaments of her hair dress. The companion wears scarlet skirts.

At the foot of the dunes the children are still playing.

It is the real Holland.

And altogether beautiful.





TREASURY OF THE LAND

A msterdam is one of the finest cities in the world. That is certain.

There is not a capital anywhere in which, amidst all modern activities, so many gems of architecture have been preserved, not purely for sightseeing purposes but to play an active part in the busy life of the city: for in the stately houses along the gleaming and quiet canals, the modern Amsterdam citizen works in his offices, shops and stores.

In Amsterdam there is a real unity of old and new in such visible and hidden harmony as can be found in scarcely any other great city.

But there are other harmonies in Amsterdam besides the harmonious blending of old and new.

There is the harmony of certain provincial traits and of the appearance so typical of a metropolis.

The harmony of great activity and of contemplative, almost meditative, silence.

That of colourful and bustling street life – enlivened by the strains of purely Dutch music such as that of street organs and carillons in high towers, enhanced by the bright colours of flowers in the baskets of retail sellers and on the flat barges of wholesale dealers, – the harmony of bustling street life and of the contemplative modesty of churches, universities and museums.

Living capital of a living land, Amsterdam is the centre, with all the outer and inner characteristics thereof: banks and offices, shops and stores, churches and theatres, newspaper buildings and cinemas.

But in the heart of this heart of the Netherlands, close to the pulsating arteries, are the numerous almshouse courts, tranquil and demure, and the hundreds of quiet and narrow streets in an ever cool twilight between old and dark facades.

There is the stillness too of the wondrous canals, rings of unruffled shining water piercing the centre of the city, along which the great merchants of olden times built their stately houses; endless rows of impressive facades with the cool arresting symmetry of clear windows, rich cornices, doors and steps. In each passing season the canals have their characteristic beauty; ever unequalled.

The sun and the snow, the trees and the bridges, the facades and the water, always show their play of line and colour, of movement and stillness, in this picture of town beauty unparalleled throughout the world.

Were it only for this, Amsterdam could justifiably be called treasure-house of the Netherlands. But there is so much more. Treasures are piled up. The treasury of beauty is filled to the brim. Museums are of a bewildering wealth: they display the highlights of all periods of Netherlands art.

Amsterdam, however, is indescribable in its outer and inner variety of detail.

It is a city which has to be discovered slowly, step by step. A city which calls for a quiet approach. A city of overwhelming vehemence; full of captivating boisterous life.

But a city you have to relish gradually and carefully like a painting or a poem: the barges full of flowers on the face of the « Singel »; the cool interior of its churches; the magic of its canals and facades; the charm of the cafe terraces in its crowded squares and streets; the immeasurable riches of its museums; and everywhere the water and the sky, the flowers and the trees, and the symphony of street music.

One of the finest cities in the world.

Heart of the Netherlands.

Treasure-house of the Netherlands.



From the spire of the Zuiderkerk you discover the weighing-house with its sharp little pinnacles









A tourist boat. Old trees, new cars. And (as always) bicycles.











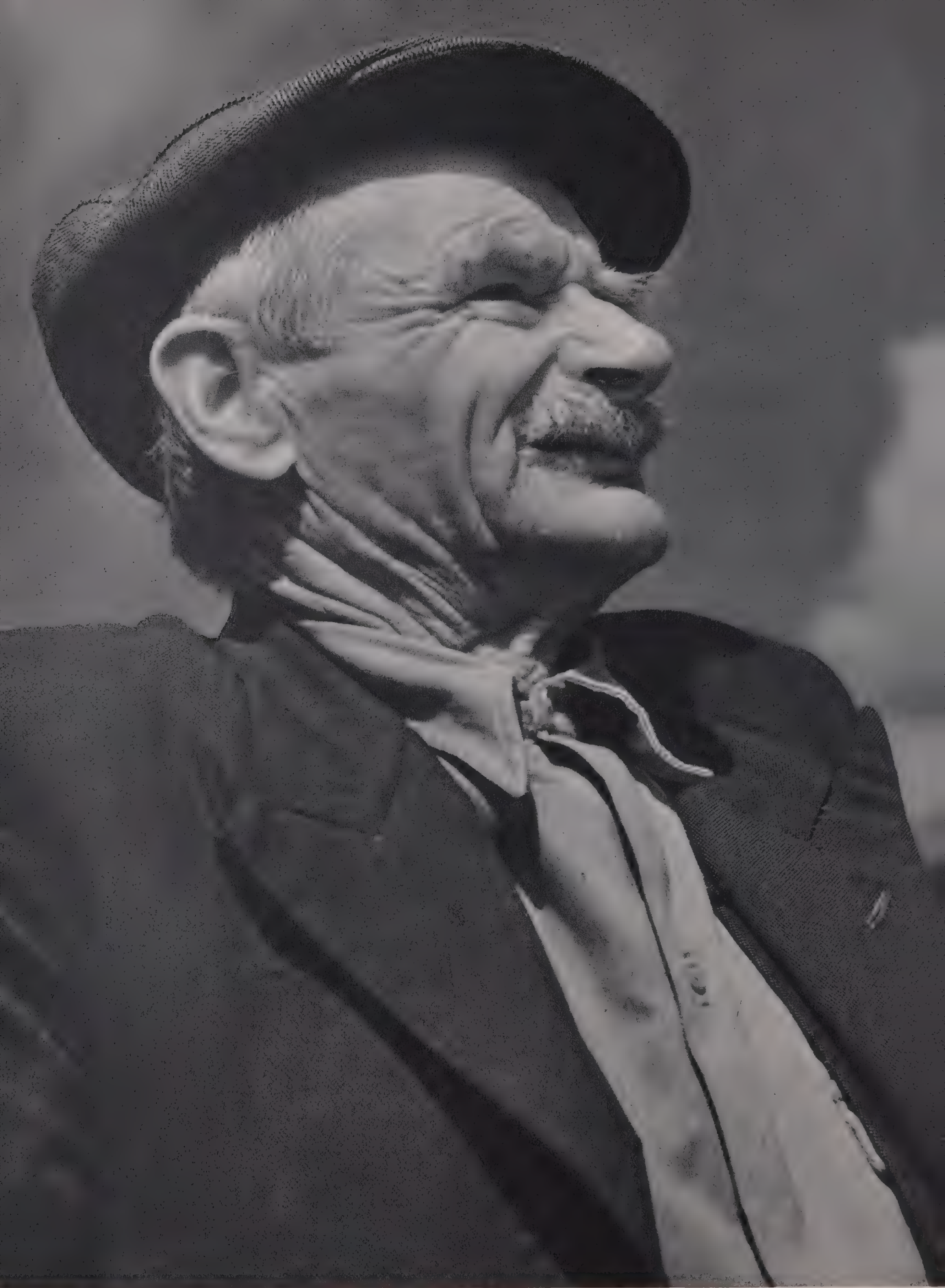












EVER INDUSTRIOUS

A large, ornate, blackletter-style capital letter 'E' that serves as a decorative initial for the first paragraph. It has a long horizontal base and a tall, slightly curved vertical stem.

Every Netherlander will agree that the living, tangible and great symbol of Holland's national strength is Rotterdam. For no city so ravaged by the war has so nobly arisen from its ruins.

Throughout the Netherlands there have been years of hard work to remove the miseries of the war; everywhere ruins were cleared, houses built, rebuilt or repaired. But of all Holland Rotterdam, the greatest and most mutilated sufferer, so tragic in its postwar helplessness, might well be regarded as the very symbol of the terror which swept the Netherlands.

Those who saw Rotterdam immediately after the war, sprawling and bleeding, could not imagine how this harbour city, once so proud and mighty, could ever rise again from its ruins.

Somewhere in Rotterdam, at an excellently chosen place, a new statue has been erected: a man with his heart torn out of his chest and his arms raised to heaven in despair. This was Rotterdam after the terrible destruction from the air to which it had been exposed so helplessly, hopelessly. The very heart had been torn out of this large city; its harbours, the core of its existence, were destroyed to become stagnant pools of ruin. Indeed, at the time it seemed that Rotterdam was doomed to extinction.

But not for one single hour or day did that city accept such helplessness. Work was carried on at such a speed and with such a passion for recovery that it also became a symbol of national resurrection.

See, today, how alive it is. The harbour is again one of the largest, busiest and best-equipped of Western Europe, nay, of the world. Commerce flourishes. Factories work at full capacity. Personal and municipal initiative merged their efforts in the reconstruction of the city – a reconstruction which, in many respects, has led to unprecedented results: the large Wholesalers' Building is probably unique in the world, whilst the Lijnbaan is a shopping centre so modern in its construction and so novel of conception that it is unequalled anywhere.

We cannot help being impressed by this reconstruction of a hitherto unknown conception, and when physically, as it were, we hear and feel how the city's heart beats again at an exciting and inviting rhythm.

There is no one in the Netherlands who does not take pride in this resurrection, nor is there anyone who does not deeply admire the Rotterdam community spirit which has brought about rebirth in such a noble form.

The statue of the man-without-heart belongs, to a certain extent, to the ghostly past. But it also expresses, in its symbol of despair, how the present recovered its heart, – the heart that beats strongly again.

It is remarkable how all Holland has been inspired, and is still being inspired, by Rotterdam – for the country's war wounds have been steadily healed by the inspiring example of Rotterdam's undaunted vigour. From the dogged energy of this great city, which time and again surprises the country with new, tangible and impressive reconstruction, others also are drawing the strength to carry on.

Rotterdam has always been industrious in the past. In just over one century it grew from an insignificant village to the first harbour city of the country and to one of the most important harbour cities of Europe and the world.

Within one terrible day it was destroyed, but – ever industrious – it has risen from its ashes and renewed itself in an inspiring epic of courage. Today, this new Rotterdam has become a sight worth seeing for hundreds of thousands.





























ROYAL CITY

A

s with every other city, The Hague has many faces. One of these is regal. Yet in the real sense of the word, it is no longer royal, for it is the Royal Residence only in name, despite the diplomats and the «C.D.» cars and all the glamorous paraphernalia of administrative dignity. Nevertheless, The Hague has preserved its royal aspect and its royal atmosphere. It still is, to cite a now wellworn expression, «the finest village of Europe».

The Hague is only completely itself when the sun shines and when you can sit on a terrace on the pavement.

Except for Paris, there is no town in Western Europe where it comes so natural to people to sit on terraces as in The Hague. There are, indeed, people who, turning with the sun, go from one terrace to another in the Buitenhof. When you spend two hours on the terrace of each of the six cafes, you have done a full day's work. This kind of daily work seems utterly useless when you do not have the wisdom to know that to be lazy is more useful than to work.

Amsterdam people say: «There they are again: The Hague people have nothing else to do than to sit.» That, of course, is not true. Hard work is done in The Hague. But sometimes one cannot avoid the impression that all The Hague people all through the summer do nothing else than populate the cafe terraces. And that is what makes The Hague so delightful.

And Scheveningen too, which after all is nothing but The Hague-on-the-sea.

Perhaps on one of those rare mild summer evenings, you are on Scheveningen promenade, – in a wicker chair right on the pavement. And you watch all those people sauntering by. If you had to pay to see this grand parade along the boulevard – for hours on end, to and fro, up and down, passing before your chair, tens of thousands of people, – it would cost you tens of thousands of guilders. But now you just get it free of charge.

There are tame fools who never stop walking: the whole long summer evening, to and fro, up and down. And those saucy men are watching the girls. But most of them finally sit down somewhere to watch others pass by, up and down, to and fro.

Shining cars are there too. Cars that also keep doing the rounds of the boulevard. But these, judging by their human inmates, are not the most royal products of Royal The Hague.

You just sit and watch.

People in love. Nice people. Dull and affected, silent and loud, gay and quiet people.

Scheveningen fisherwomen rolling along in their wide skirts.

A gentleman wearing white summer gaiters.

Mother and father who – still arm-in-arm after forty years – come to select their favourite little table, their table of every summer evening.

A slow policeman on a bicycle.

And solitary gentlemen. Mainly solitary gentlemen. There are very many solitary gentlemen in Scheveningen.

Yes, there are many solitary gentlemen all over The Hague. Therefore there are many benches for lonely gentlemen to sit on.

You can choose a bench by the Vijverberg quite near the Heart of Holland, the Binnenhof, and equally near to the loveliest street of Holland, the Lange Voorhout.

You look over the still water with the white swans across to the little island, a patch of green in the glistening picture, which all children find mysterious; there they would all like to be Robinson Crusoe.

A deep grey quiet lies over the lake, over the Maurits House, over the Little Tower where the Minister of Home Affairs has his office.

Benches are along the gravel path. On each bench lonely gentlemen of The Hague.

How long has the wall of the Binnenhof been reflected in the mirror of the lake? For how many centuries has history been made?

You are sitting there in the warm sun and at your side is an old man. He is staring silently across the Vijverberg. A pensioned civil servant, you think, for there are so many of them in The Hague.

Anyway, a wise man. To be able to be silent so long and so deeply, and only to look. Do not start a discussion. There are people of whom you can see by their looks that they prefer to be silent.

It is dead silent on such a Hague afternoon hour in summer. A mother wheeling a child passes by. And a gentleman in a hurry, who comes to remind you of the temporariness of all temporary things.

He who can dream with open eyes can imagine strange worlds from a bench at the Vijverberg in The Hague. Noblemen walk along the gravel path. Knights are together in the Knights Hall.

For this is the Royal Hague.

































SPIRIT AND HEART



n a search for the real spirit and heart of the Netherlands one must look not only to the tangible and visible impressiveness of its churches but also to the undeviating devotion of its people.

The deepest values of a truly national life are to be found not merely in the overwhelming riches of its museums, or in the continuous activities of its artists, or in the fascinating life of its universities and colleges, or in the intensity with which its intellectuals participate in the international cultural life circling around this small country, or in the inspiration engendered by its numerous educational institutions, or in its book-shops, editorial offices, theatres, broadcasting studios, sports-fields and cinemas, – but they are also to be found, even more deeply and widely, in its traditions and folklore, its manners and customs, its historically-formed ties with its own soil and water, and with the distances of countries and seas.

He who wishes to understand the spirit and heart of the Netherlands must never lose sight of these distances, never forget that this people of peaceful navigators once conquered worlds; he must always remember that its tie with the continent of Western Europe cannot becloud its view of the world seas, as it lives as much from the Atlantic as it does from the Western European world.

However Dutch – and only Dutch – in many of its national characteristics of spirit and heart of faith and culture and politics, the Netherlands is in such an intensive measure part of Western Europe and of extensive territories of the world overseas that its spiritual life bears many characteristics of world citizenship.

The closeness of this narrow country occasionally reveals those painful results which are common to small communities; and yet this closeness is so often blown away by violent world storms that we Netherlandsers feel justified in calling ourselves world citizens.

Many a larger country may be more self-sufficient than ours, according to its spirit and heart, but the Netherlands has a world tie derived not only from its own glory of the past but also from the economic and cultural necessities of the present, including the need of understanding the neighbouring continent and the overseas world.

Yet there are many in the Netherlands who are not satisfied with the cultural state of affairs. They believe that the atmosphere of this country, especially with respect to its literature, has never been sufficiently European, and is now less so than ever. In some respects, they may be right. For although there are sufficient Netherlands authors occupying an indisputably important place in the world of letters, there are many examples of Netherlands literature, especially its prose, being restricted and parochial.

This, indeed, has always been a striking aspect of Netherlands literary character. And this cosy and intimate «Camera Obscura» outlook, which is still the basic characteristic of our literature, is symbolic of the whole state of affairs in our admittedly limited literary sphere.

Yet this need be neither denied nor concealed when it is recognized that tens of thousands of Netherlands find their joy of life in new art. Acting, painting, sculpture, architecture and poetry are all progressing, despite an undeniably domestic scepticism, and, by comparison with other small European countries, certainly not in a discouraging way.

The spirit and heart of the Netherlands are undoubtedly inherent in the riches of its museums, in its historical origin and its practical expressions of art and culture, in the grandeur of its past based principally on its overseas relations, and the achievements of the present; but to understand fully that spirit and heart, the unbreakable tie with land and water must also be recognized.

For it is land and water that determine the real nature of its spirit and heart.

























GLORY OF THE TOWNS



It is always an adventure to wander for the first time through a Netherland town, for the small towns are one of the glories of the Netherlands.

Each, indeed, is always an unknown world in itself.

Its streets are as strange to you as its people; you do not know its houses or the things of its concern. You read names on the quiet doors; behind the windows you see faces you do not know. And the melody which is poured from the town hall tower – every half and every full hour – has a strange tone for the casual stranger wandering through the quiet streets.

Perhaps you have to visit someone living in such a small town in a street the name of which is unknown to you. It will be easy to find the street, for the people are placid and kind. Quietly they give their time to a stranger.

But it remains an adventure, because it is not your own world which you are going to explore. Its strangeness has already assailed you in the station square, so wide and spacious for such a small town, and lying deserted in the midday sun. To the people who are living here it is quite natural that, coming from the station square, you find yourself immediately in a little park. But it is strange to you. For you had expected a main street or a fashionable avenue with a dignified name. Dignified people often live near the station in small towns; in large houses where life is carefully shielded.

But here it happens to be a park: avenues, a lawn with flower-beds and a little pond. Two swans are floating in the sunlight. There is a bench near the pond. There is nobody else in the whole world. And the queer thought occurs to you that you travelled all those hours, or all those miles, only to watch those two swans gliding through the afternoon light.

Then, suddenly, you are in the town. Twelve streets around a large market square. And you realize that here the people have built themselves a little world.

There is, of course, a stately, centuries-old town hall which you should always enter. For there are always fine things to be seen in every one of those old Dutch town halls: even if it is only a majestic staircase; or a burgomaster's historic room; or a council chamber with gleaming brass chandeliers; or a remarkable painting.

And outside, in the streets, old narrow facades; or broad majestic frontage of manor houses preserved through the centuries; or the ancient home of one of the great families of the town which in these days perhaps houses the district court, or the polder house.

And almost certainly there will be a gateway: a large princely one with little towers and pinnacles; or a small modest one, just very old. You pass underneath the cool archway and you are suddenly in front of the broad river with a wide view into the far distance of the horizon.

Over such a town, too, carillon chimes are always clanging or pealing. And, if your heart is sensitive to love of quiet beauty as it has been preserved in tens of such little old Dutch towns, you can wander there for hours as through a romantic, surprising adventure.

Until you return to the station: through all the winding streets, and across the market square with its beautiful town hall.

The swans are now floating dreamily in the glory of the approaching twilight.

«Farewell stranger», says the little town.

«You will never come to know my deepest nature.

You may have seen my beauty in the stillness.

But you have not discovered my secrets.»

















































RELEASE THE BOW

A multi-millionaire is as rare in the Netherlands as an elephant or a rhinoceros, which means that there are as few gay evening banquets with flowing fountains and scintillating fireworks as there are wild animal hunting parties. At best the local celebrity may shoot a hare or a pheasant; whilst after a rubber of bridge the festivity usually reaches its climax with a sausage-roll and a proud glass of very ordinary wine.

«The bow cannot always remain bent», says Mr Willemsen. So Mrs Willemsen and he go to the cinema each Saturday night.

«Man cannot live solely on work», says Mr Pietersen, «and so I have my bowling party every Wednesday.»

«Everyone deserves an occasional little pleasure», says the good country nobleman; and so every year he spends Christmas with his dearly beloved in the city: a dinner, a theatre, and a concert. Refreshed and enlivened, he returns home saying: «We can live on that for another whole year, especially as nowadays we have the radio, as well as our regular portfolio of magazines which keep us in touch with the world.»

More «klaverjas», a Dutch version of whist, than polo is played in the Netherlands; Netherlands go by the million to watch football or to the cinema; and this country has no spectacular marquis to give a fancy dress garden party at the cost of one million guilders.

When the Netherlands releases the bow, it is only a small one. There is a sort of night life in the three large cities, but it is tame and harmless, and in the entire country there are only a few night clubs open after 1.0 a.m. Just a little dancing, a few cabaret turns, – and that is all there is to it. Half the Netherlands is in bed by half past ten at night, and at eleven o'clock the lights from Harlingen to Hulst, from Helder to Heerlen, are *out*.

We Netherlands are a sober people in all things, even though we have a fair or a carnival here and there. Our card evenings are quiet, and our attendance at the theatre or concert hall is both moderate and cautious.

We say: «a sound spirit belongs in a sound body.» Therefore we release the bow of our spirit by bending the bow of the body. We play football and enjoy gymnastics; we walk,

sail and skate. Our excitement is found in either playing or watching sports, or in Sunday walks through the beautiful countryside.

We say «yes» to life. But we say it simply and do not shout it.

We release the bow, but only according to our Dutch character: our arrows are few and their points are not sharp. No rhinoceros is killed by our celebration.













































HOW THE DUTCH WORK



restling and Escaping is not merely the device in the coat-of-arms of Zeeland; it has for centuries been the motto of the entire Netherlands. For it has ever been in the Dutchman's blood to wrestle when he works, not only when it concerns the continuous fight against the water, but also when it concerns the low spirit of the time and even when the simple «daily bread» is at stake.

Not talking but doing, is the simple principle by which the Netherlands people, in its broad ranks, has lived, although it has never hesitated to make its verbal contribution whether in its snug homes or its dignified parliament.

In this way Netherlands industrial life became what it is and the products of Dutch ingenuity and Dutch labour became known and demanded all over the world.

In this way its mercantile fleet became what it is; its industrial and agricultural products became what they are; its air line became one of the most reliable and most progressive. In this way by doing and not merely talking, Netherlands are still among the first to reveal unworked territories for labour.

The Netherlands has always received the world's respect for its energy but it came in greater measure than ever after the wartime destruction, for the world has seldom witnessed with deeper awe how quickly and strongly a people recovered itself after such a calamity.

It is in the Netherlands nature not to understand fully the respectful admiration of others for its own achievements, because work is a natural necessity to the Netherlander and he therefore cannot understand why he should not work, and even work twice as hard when circumstances demand it.

«He who does not work shall not eat» is a simple expression. It has little fantasy to it but it can lead to fantastic actions, actions which are very visible in their results in the Netherlands itself and throughout the world.

The ordinary Netherlander is the last man to praise himself for the result of his labour. But foreigners, and Netherlands who have been abroad for a long time, express their praise because they are able to compare.

Yet perhaps this Netherlands' diligence, closely considered, is not really so praiseworthy because it is so «usual»; because the Netherlander was reared and educated on work and fulfilment of duty and because not-to-work-hard is a generally acknowledged «sin».

Labour is a part of human dignity.

And this dignity is highly honoured in the Netherlands.

Different from peoples living in a blessed sunny climate, to be idle is neither virtue nor wisdom in the Netherlands. The art-of-being-idle is not carried out by us, and he who, as an exception, does indulge in it, is pointed at by a warningly wagging finger: he is a sluggard and a shame to family and community.

There are times, of course, when some of us wish that this was not so, and that the dutiful, continuous, never-declining activity were alternated and adorned by doing nothing, that completely doing-nothing which sometimes can be so delightful and elevating.

But mostly we find a reason for justifiable pride in the labour of the millions of people in this restricted territory, who do what they have been given to do and who, quietly and incessantly, fulfil their duty towards their family and community, day in day out, year after year, in steady labour.

We were very proud of that fulfilment of duty when the country was destroyed by war and occupation, and when the people, in every rank, worked in such a way that the restoration has surprised the entire world, and ourselves.

We are strongest in united labour in such moments.









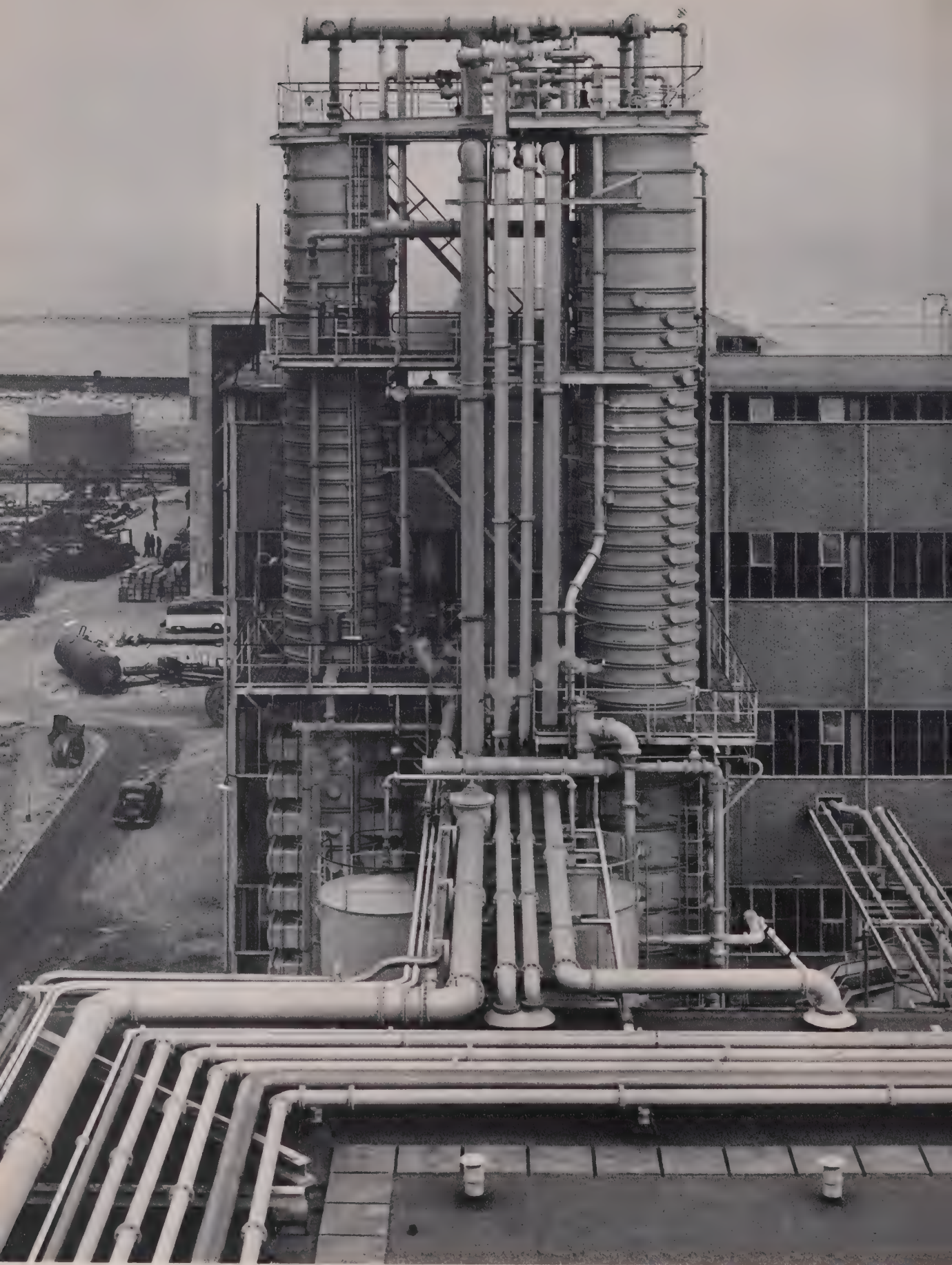




































THE BEAUTIFUL ARRAY



alk through Holland on a lovely November day. There is sun on the water, sun on the land, sun on the bridges, sun on the trees and on all towers at the horizon. Truly wonderful that you can still enjoy this in the Netherlands in November.

Just take a bus in the city and alight somewhere in the midst of the fields. It is, of course only a simple adventure, too simple to say any more about it.

But on returning, in the late November afternoon, to the halfwarm stove in an early-darkening room, you realize that such an ordinary walk through a little piece of Holland really belongs to the good things of life and that it made you cheerful. For there are not many things so good and so clean as merely to wander through a little corner of Holland with the distant city towers, the fragrance of the earth, the shining November day and the stillness. by the side of a wide, straight ditch. Sometimes there is a white wooden bridge; but always

There is a narrow country road, very straight and very unromantic; you can walk along it there are clusters of trees in the picture.

A windmill, sturdy and wide, with its wings in such a stately gesture to the sky that it looks almost human: a giant in the country raising its arms to the infinite. The miller's dog barking angrily at the stranger is the only sound in the stillness.

In this way you walk through space that is so Dutch and yet is so strange because you are used to all the myriad sounds of the city.

You are passing a farm. The sun shines in the windows. There are flowers, for there are always flowers anywhere in the Netherlands. A man stands in the doorway. You exchange a greeting, for you are now the only people in the whole world and you welcome one another.

The path stretches for an hour into the distance. You hear your own footfall. There are birds in the sky. The entire country is quiet in anticipation of the death of the year. The trees are motionless on the outskirts of the little town you are now reaching. You walk through an old gate into the wide main street. And you marvel that there are still large houses with blue steps, with shining windows and high doors.

Inside in high rooms is the quiet life of those who, from generation to generation, have lived

in this house. But when you are wandering through the town as a stranger in the afternoon there is hardly anything which reminds you of life. There is scarcely a soul in the streets, and a town like this is quickly looked at: there is another gate and you are again outside having a far view over the country.

There is always a very quiet park with old trees and mostly, in their midst, a graveyard where all the old names of the town are chiselled in the stones. But it is not in any way gloomy. It is quiet and still and something of the history of the town is told by the names of those who worked there and who organized its life for centuries.

Finally you enter the high road to meet the bus which takes you back to the city.

A small adventure; because it has been in the stillness which is ever mysterious. But it has also revealed the purity of the beautiful array of Holland, a purity you cannot do without if you are to remain wise amidst the hustle of life among people who are too busy to greet you as they pass.





























THE ETERNAL SOURCE



Water – fresh and salt – is the eternal source of the Netherlands, prosperity. Its nature is from the water; from the sea and the rivers its existence.

It is an old and thousand-times-told story: how the Netherlands formed itself from the water which is its friend and its primeval enemy.

It is an old story not yet told to the end; for again and again a new piece of Holland is born out of the water, again and again the water tries to retrieve what has been wrestled from it. Indeed, an old – almost threadbare – truth: the Netherlands and the water are one.

Look at an ordinary map of the world and see how the Netherlands is but a small delta of big rivers.

But look around in the Netherlands, view the Netherlands itself, and see what successive generations of «delta-inhabitants» have made of this country between the rivers and the sea: an impressive spot on the earth, a treasury of many good things.

The eternal source – fresh water and salt – of a people's existence: in terms of matter and in terms of the spirit; in the past, in the present and, it is hoped and expected, also in the future.

The fresh water makes the land fertile; out of the salt water emerges new land.

The fresh water makes its harbours great and links it to the European continent; the brine carries its mercantile fleet to all quarters of the earth.

Cattle is grazed in the meadows flanking its rivers; its fishing fleet swarms out over the sea.

Thanks to the water this delta was once an empire. And still from the water comes its fertility, the water which makes its flowers bloom and its plants thrive in great abundance.

The water: eternal source of inspiration for poets and conquerers, for painters and explorers, for farmers and engineers.

A source of beauty. Go along the beaches; stand on the high dikes of the rivers; watch how the Netherlands draws beauty as well as prosperity from this eternal source.

Walk by the narrow, straight canals cutting through its pastures. Sail on its lakes. Wander along the canals of its cities. It is always the beauty of the water, one of the greatest beauties of the Netherlands.

So is the water the real essence of the Netherlands. For from the water comes that remarkable light which was and is an inspiration for its great schools of painting. From the water even its smell – for the fragrance of water and grass is characteristic of this country. From the water is the longing for the great adventure, for from overseas has come and still comes a great deal of the history of the Netherlands people.











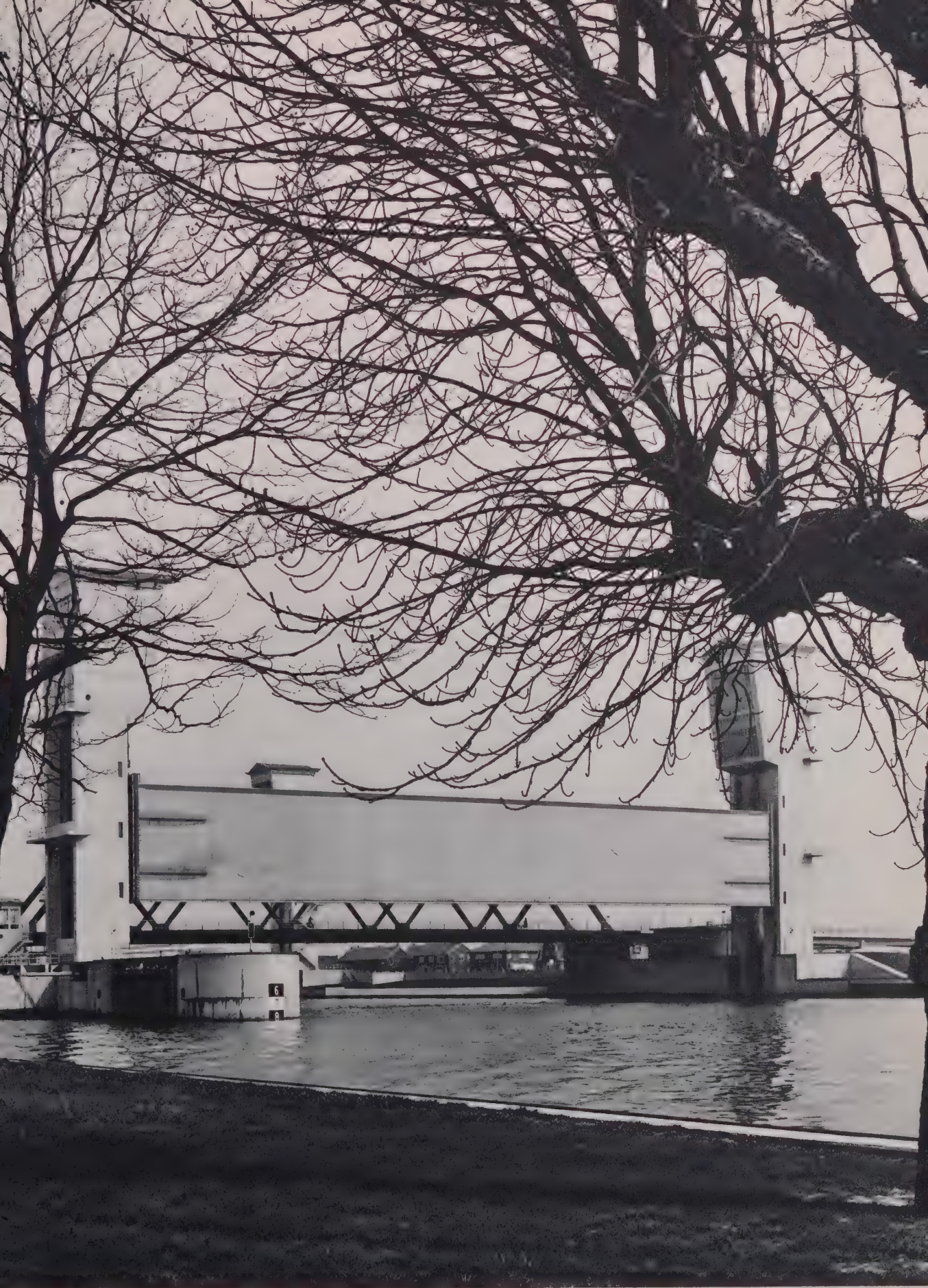














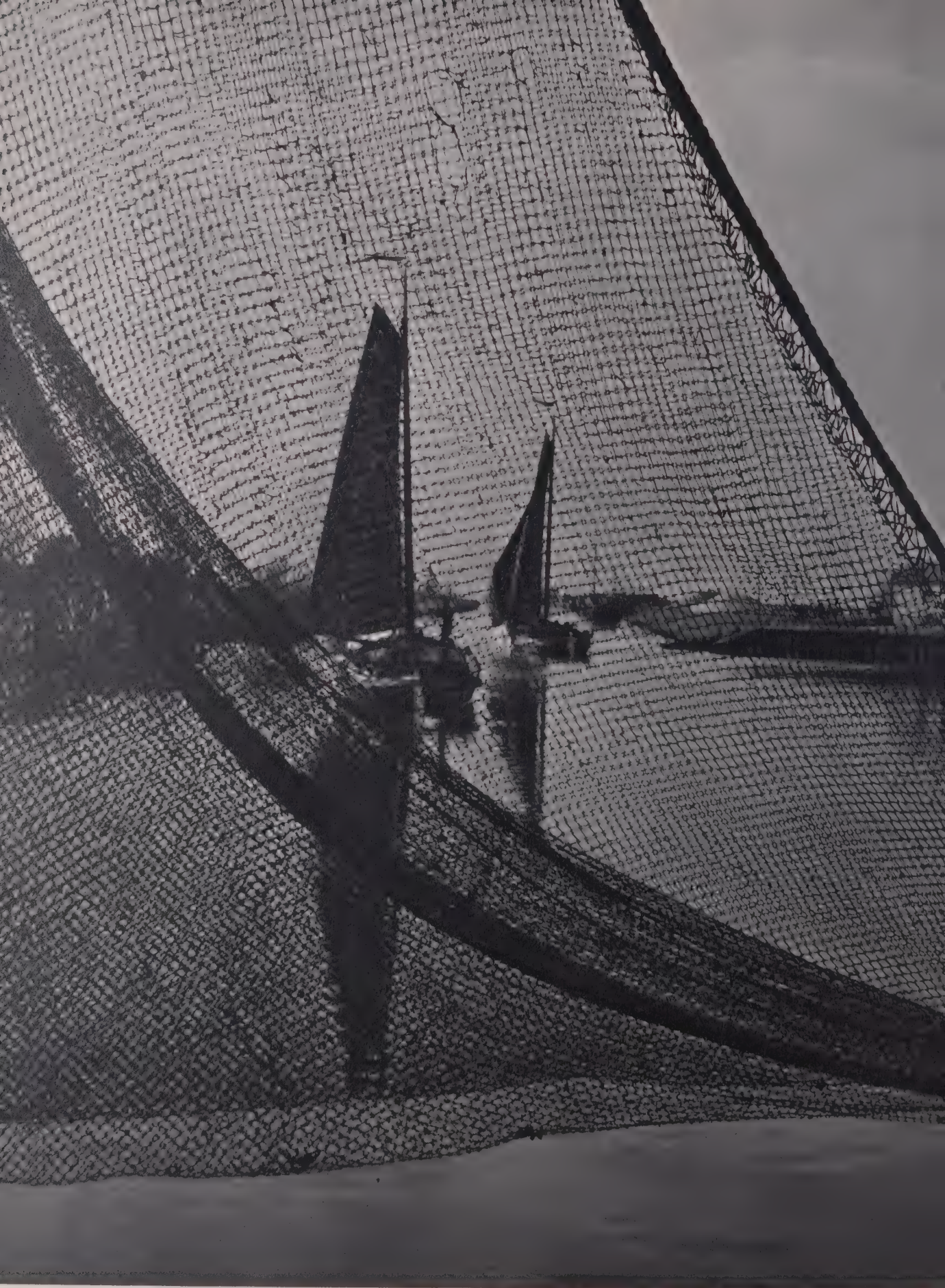








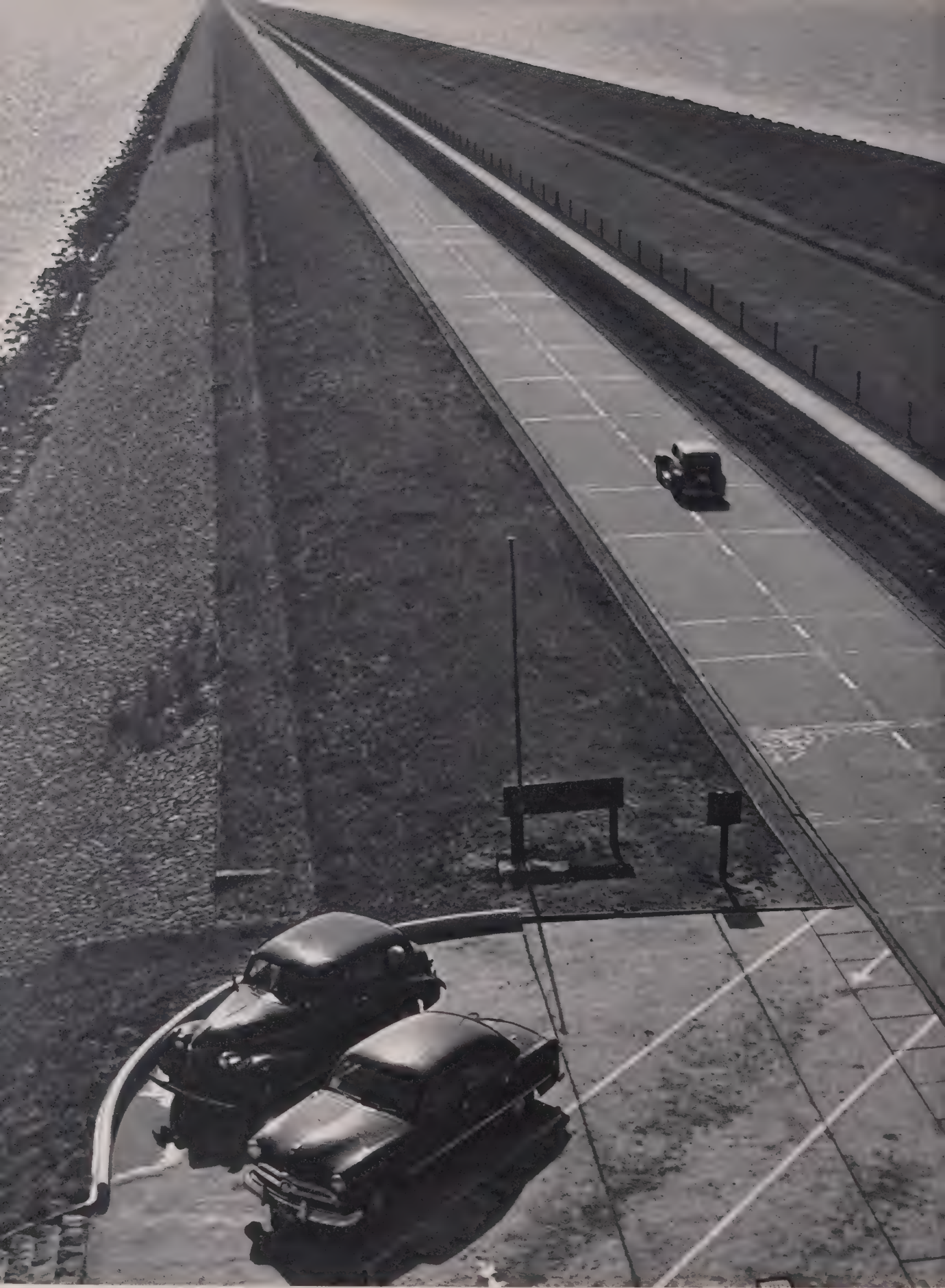












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